

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 MCT-01 SY-05 USSS-00 IO-13 CPR-01 SSO-00

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R 230933Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7740

INFO AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 2245

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SA, US, ASEC

SUBJECT: SAG CONCERN ABOUT SECURITY OF ITS OFFICES IN THE UNITED STATES

SUMMARY: SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF FONMIN PRINCE SAUD, MFA CHIEF OF PROTOCOL STATES SAG IS WORRIED ABOUT SECURITY OF ITS OFFICES AND REPRESENTATIVES IN NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON. PROTOCOL CHIEF POINTED OUT THAT URBAN TERRORISTS HAD RECENTLY ACTED IN A DARING AND SUCCESSFUL WAY IN WASHINGTON, AND NOTED THAT SAG ASSIGNS MORE THAN NINETY SECURITY PEOPLE TO PROTECT THE U.S. EMBASSY AND CONSULATE GENERAL. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, SAG COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO UNDERSTAND IF ONE OF ITS REPRESENTATIVES WERE VICTIMIZED IN A SECURITY INCIDENT. WE POINTED OUT TO PROTOCOL CHIEF DIFFERING BUT NONETHELESS EFFECTIVE SECURITY TACTICS FOLLOWED BY WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK POLICE FORCES. SOME FURTHER REASSURANCE TO MFA, HOWEVER, WOULD BE USEFUL. END SUMMARY.

1. SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF FOREIGN MINISTER PRINCE SAUD, MFA CHIEF OF PROTOCOL AMBASSADOR SONBOL TOLD DCM THAT SAG WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE SECURITY OF ITS OFFICES IN
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THE UNITED STATES, AND THE SAFETY OF ITS PEOPLE. IN NEW YORK, FOR INSTANCE, THE CONSULATE GENERAL HAD RECENTLY RECEIVED A NUMBER OF THREATENING PHONE CALLS. NEW YORK POLICE DID NOT SEEM VERY CONCERNED WHEN THESE CALLS WERE BROUGHT TO THEIR ATTENTION. IN WASHINGTON, CRIME AND MUGGINGS WERE A CONSTANT WORRY TO SAUDI DIPLOMATS, AND THE SAUDIS WERE NOW ALL THE MORE CON-

CERNED AFTER TERRORISTS (HANAFIS) SHOWED THEY COULD SEIZE BUILDINGS AND TAKE MANY HOSTAGES, INCLUDING THE MAYOR OF WASHINGTON HIMSELF.

2. AMBASSADOR SONBOL SAID THIS WAS SOMETHING OF AN EXPLORATORY CONVERSATION. SAUDI OFFICES WOULD LIKE MORE SECURITY IN WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK, BUT THEY WERE NOT EXACTLY DEMANDING IT YET. THEY WONDERED, THOUGH, IF ANYTHING MIGHT BE DONE TO PROVIDE THEM WITH ADDITIONAL SECURITY. SONBOL MENTIONED THAT THE SAG HAD A CONTRACT WITH A PRIVATE AMERICAN COMPANY (WHICH HE THOUGHT WAS HEADED BY FORMER PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICIALS) TO ENHANCE SECURITY OF SAG OFFICES IN U.S. VIA ALARMS AND OTHER ELECTRONIC MEANS.

3. IN CLOSING, SONBOL SAID HE WANTED TO MAKE TWO MAIN POINTS: FIRST, THE SAG PROVIDES AT ITS OWN EXPENSE MORE THAN NINETY NATIONAL GUARDSMEN AND SECURITY OFFICIALS TO PROTECT THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, THE AMERICAN EMBASSY COMPOUND, AND THE CONSULATE GENERAL COMPOUND IN DHAHRAN. A FOLLOW-CAR HAS EVEN BEEN PROVIDED NOW FOR THE CONSUL GENERAL. SECOND, THE UNITED STATES SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THAT IN VIEW OF ALL THAT SAUDI ARABIA IS DOING FOR THE SECURITY OF ITS AMERICAN OFFICIAL GUESTS, THE SAG COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO UNDERSTAND IF ANYTHING SERIOUS WERE TO BEFALL A SAUDI FACILITY OR A SAUDI REPRESENTATIVE IN THE U.S. SPEAKING FOR HIMSELF, SONBOL WONDERED IF IT MIGHT NOT BE BETTER FOR THE USG TO TAKE SOME PREVENTIVE ACTION NOW, AND PRECLUDE AN INCIDENT THAT COULD BE MOST EMBARRASSING

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TO BOTH SIDES?

4. DCM REPLIED THAT MINISTRY'S CONCERNS WOULD BE FULLY PASSED TO DEPARTMENT OF STATE. HAVING HAD SOME EXPERIENCE IN SECURITY PROBLEMS AFFECTING ANOTHER ARAB EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON (LIBYAN), DCM SAID IT WAS NOT THE PRACTICE OF OUR SECURITY FORCES TO PERMANENTLY STATION RESOURCES AT SPECIFIC POINTS. MOBILE COVERAGE OF AN AREA IN DEPTH, USING MEN ON FOOT AND SQUAD CARS, WAS CONSIDERED THE MOST EFFECTIVE USE OF THE MANPOWER AVAILABLE. IN OCCASIONS OF HIGH AND SPECIFIC THREAT, OF COURSE, THE POSTURE COULD BE RECONSIDERED. BUT THE DCM ASKED SONBOL TO CONSIDER THAT IN NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON -- WHERE POLICE FORCES HAVE HAD TO PROTECT LITERALLY THOUSANDS OF DIPLOMATS FOR MANY YEARS -- U.S. AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CONTROL PROBLEMS OF SECURITY OF EITHER A CRIMINAL OR POLITICAL NATURE. THIS WAS AN IMPRESSIVE RECORD, AND SUGGESTED THAT OUR SECURITY COVERAGE, WHILE UNOBTRUSIVE, WAS GENERALLY EFFECTIVE. DCM FINALLY NOTED THAT THE USG WAS ALSO TRYING TO IMPROVE THE PHYSICAL

SECURITY OF ITS POSTS ALL AROUND THE WORLD, AND ANY SUCH STEPS THE SAUDIS TOOK REGARDING THEIR OWN EMBASSIES AND CONSULTES COULD BE HELPFUL IF PROPER PROCEDURES WERE ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINED.

5. COMMENT: MFA MIGHT BE REASSURED IF EMBASSY CAN GO BACK TO SONBOL SOMETIME AND AFFIRM THAT SAUDI SECURITY CONCERNS HAVE BEEN STUDIED BY THE DEPARTMENT, WHICH BASICALLY FINDS THE PROCEDURES IN FORCE TO BE EFFECTIVE. WE SHOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT WHEN ANY SPECIFIC PROBLEM IS ANTICIPATED, THE DEPARTMENT AND THE EXECUTIVE SECURITY FORCE WOULD RESPOND QUICKLY TO A SAUDI REQUEST FOR HELP. (WE PRESUME THERE IS NO CHANCE OF MORE SPECIFICALLY AND VISIBLY GUARDING THE SAUDI EMBASSY AND RESIDENCE IN WASHINGTON, AND MUST HOPE THAT NO INCIDENT OF THE SORT AMBASSADOR SONBOL MENTIONED WILL COME TO PASS.)
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Message Attributes

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